

## **Chapter 3                      Planning Context**

### **Introduction**

Information on the characteristics of the City's population, population growth rate, and income levels is essential in planning for future community needs such as schools, public utilities, recreation facilities, police protection, emergency services, human services, and housing.

Chapters within the Comprehensive Plan utilize data from previous plans and from the U.S. Census Bureau and other population studies. This chapter includes information from several sources including past U.S. Census data, the U.S. Census Bureau's 2007 – 2009 American Community Survey (ACS), the 2010 U.S. Census of Population, and others as noted below. At the time this document was prepared, only some elements of the data from the April 2010 Census were available; thus, information from the 2000 U.S. Census is still incorporated, where necessary and applicable.

The ACS is the largest survey in the country, collecting detailed social, economic, housing, and demographic data over a three year period. This survey provides information previously collected by the decennial census long form and will eventually supply up-to-date data every year rather than once a decade. The estimates provided by the ACS represent the average characteristics of the population during the time period between January 2007 and December 2009, and therefore do not represent a single point in time.

In some instances, the U.S. Census Bureau did not supply all of the necessary information to update this chapter, and therefore, additional data is provided from the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, the Virginia Employment Commission, and others.

It is important to note that the City's population characteristics are greatly affected by the presence of two institutions of higher learning—Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) and James Madison University (JMU). The large numbers of college-aged residents within the City skew some of the City's demographic characteristics, such as age distribution and personal income. Therefore, demographic comparisons with non-college communities are not very helpful thus this chapter focuses instead on other college communities within this general region of Virginia.

### **Analysis**

#### **Population Growth**

In 1900, there were 3,521 people within the City. Over the next half-century the population increased slowly, but steadily. During the 1970s, the City experienced its first major modern surge of growth, with the population increasing by 34.7 percent to 19,671. This accelerated rate of growth coincided with a major increase in enrollment at JMU and continued through the 1980s, assisted by a major annexation in 1983 that added 11.4 square miles and an estimated 5,729 persons. During the 1980s, the City experienced its largest ten-year population increase, a substantial 56 percent, due mostly to the annexation. Growth continued during the 1990s, when the population increased by 31.8 percent, to a 2000 population of 40,453, according to the U.S. Census of Population. (The 40,453 population represents the "corrected" 2000 Census number.) The April 2010 U.S. Census of Population revealed continued growth for the City with a population of 48,914.

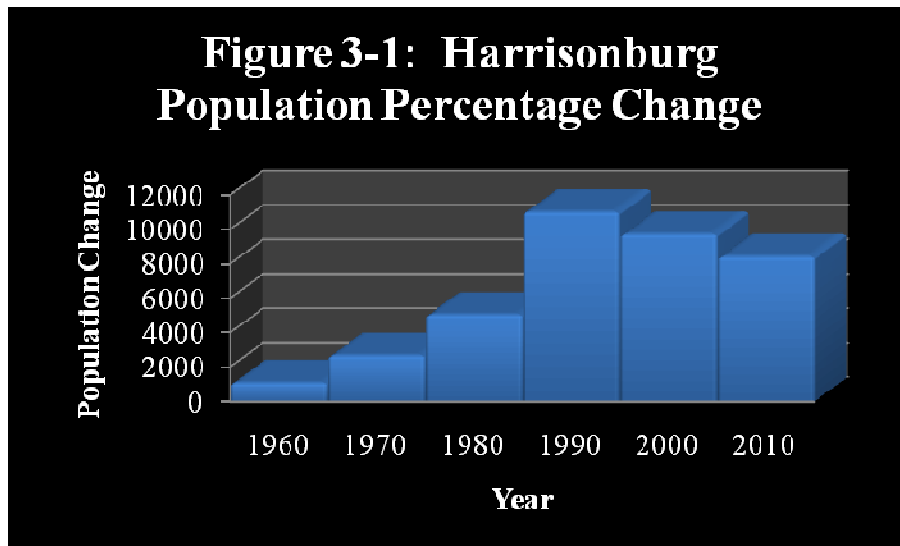


**Table 3-1: Harrisonburg Population Change, 1900-2010**

Year	Population	Number Change	Percent Change
1900	3,521		
1910	4,879	1,358	38.6%
1920	5,875	996	20.4%
-	---	---	---
1960	11,916	1106	10.2%
1970	14,605	2,689	22.6%
1980	19,671	5,066	34.7%
1990	30,707	11,036*	56.1%
2000	40,453	9,761	31.8%
2010	48,914	8,446	20.9%

Source: 1991 Comprehensive Plan; U.S. Census Bureau (Includes official corrections to 2000 Census)

\*Includes 5,729 persons added as a result of a 1983 annexation



Source: 1991 Comprehensive Plan; U.S. Census of Bureau (Includes official corrections to 2000 Census)

\*Includes 5,729 persons added as a result of a 1983 annexation

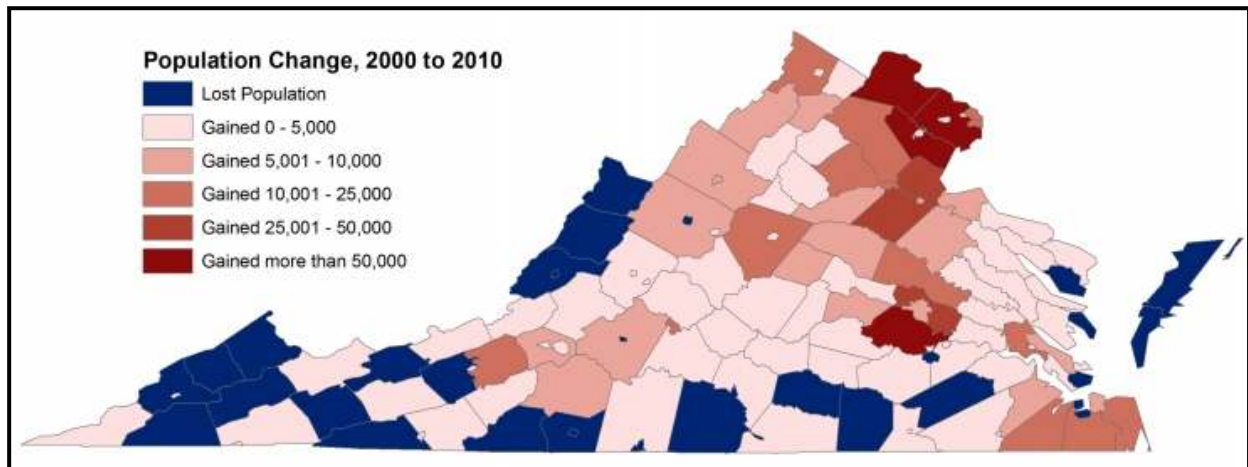
**Table 3-2: Population Comparison  
City of Harrisonburg, Rockingham County, and Virginia**

	2000 U.S. Census	2010 U.S. Census
City of Harrisonburg	40,453	48,914
Rockingham County	67,714	76,314
Virginia	7,079,030	8,001,024

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (Includes official corrections to 2000 Census)



**Figure 3-2: Virginia Population Change 2000 - 2010**



Source: Weldon Cooper Center

### Components of Growth

Population growth within a community results from a combination of the population's natural increase (births minus deaths) and migration patterns (people entering and leaving the community). While the rate of natural increase is not generally affected by government policy, migration patterns can be influenced by housing and job opportunities within a community, which in turn are affected by local government land use, housing, and economic development policies. In the City's case, migration is also affected by the student, staff, and faculty growth of EMU and JMU. Table 3-3 below illustrates trends in the components of population growth during the decades of 1980-1990, 1990-2000, and 2000-2010. This data confirms that migration of people into the City has outpaced the natural increase in the population since the 1980-1990 decade.

**Table 3-3: Harrisonburg Components of Population Change, 1980-2010**

Decade	Change in Population (#)	Natural Increase (#)*	Natural Increase (%)	Migration (#)	Migration (%)
1980-1990	11,036**	678	6.1%	10,358**	93.9%
1980s without '83 annexation	5,307	678	12.7%	4,629	87.2%
1990-2000	9,761	1,180	12.1%	8,581	87.9%
2000 – 2010	8,461	2,539	30%	5,922	70%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (Includes official corrections to 2000 Census);  
Virginia Department of Health, Center for Vital Statistics;

\*Net of births minus deaths

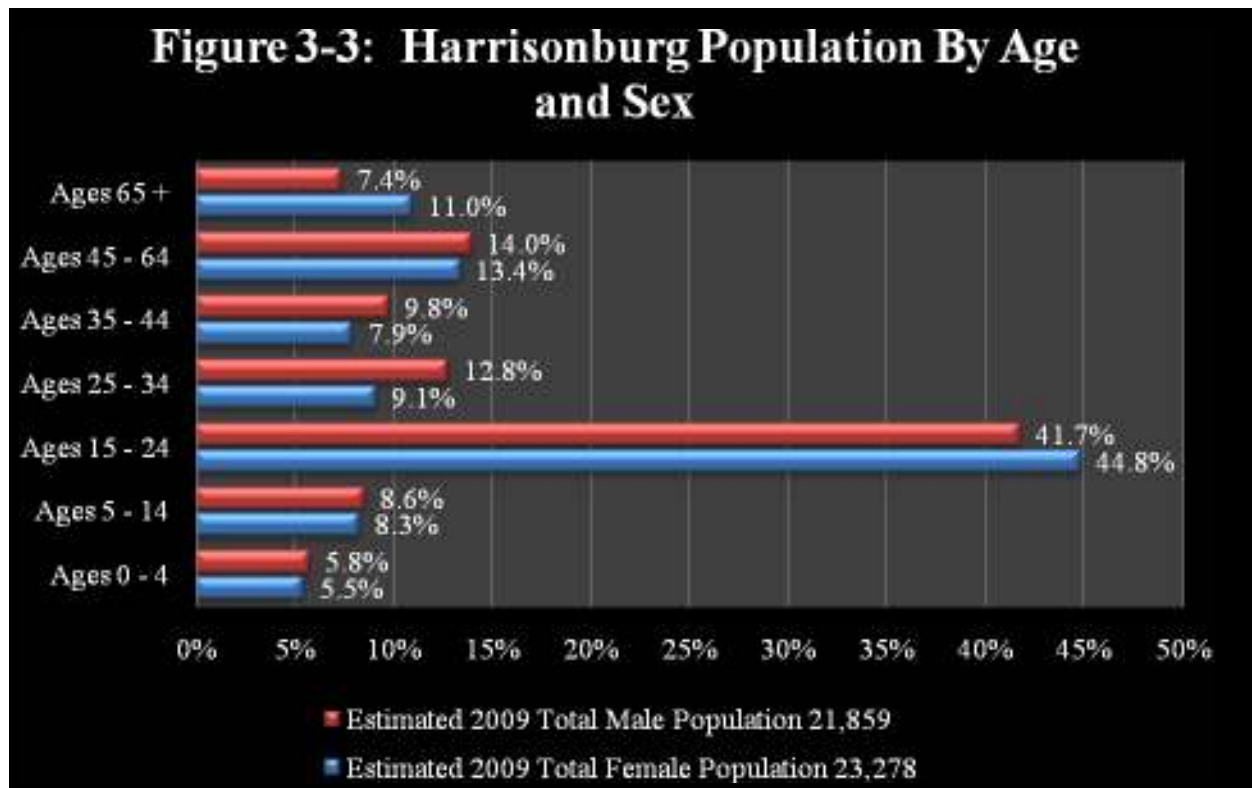
\*\*1983 annexation added 5,729 persons to the City



### Population Characteristics

The U. S. Census of Population and the ACS collect information on a wide variety of population characteristics, such as age distribution, education, and income. The City's population characteristics are greatly affected by the presence of two universities within the City limits.

The City's age structure is one of the most obvious population characteristics affected by the university populations. Figure 3-3 below breaks down the age group distribution by sex. Note the large percentage of the population in the 15-24 age group, which includes most college students. The data provided within this subsection comes from the Weldon Cooper Center's 2009 estimate. The figure demonstrates there are 23,278 females and 21,859 males that live within the City limits. Males outnumber females throughout most of the age groups except the 15-24 and the 65+ age groups, where females outnumber males by more than 3 percent in both categories. Although the below numbers are estimates for 2009, it is important to note that as of the fall of 2010, just over 60 percent of the JMU student population is female.



Source: 2009 Estimate from the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service; James Madison University

According to the Weldon Cooper Center, as of 2009 the City's median age is 22.6 years compared to Rockingham County's at 39.2 years. The City is similar to Charlottesville (at 27.9 years), which is a college city.

### Population Diversity

Harrisonburg, like most U.S. cities, is becoming more diverse as the country's overall diversity increases. During the past, immigrants from other countries have been drawn to the area in part by the labor needs of the poultry industry. Table 3-4 provides diversity statistics for the City



from the 1990 Census through the 2010 Census. This table also compares the City's data to Rockingham County and Virginia.

**Table 3-4: Diversity Characteristics  
Harrisonburg, Rockingham County, and Virginia**

	Harrisonburg		Harrisonburg		Harrisonburg		Rockingham County	Rockingham County	Virginia	Virginia
RACE*	1990 (#)	1990 (%)	2000 (#)	2000 (%)	2010 (#)	2010 (%)	2000 (%)	2010 (%)	2000 (%)	2010 (%)
White	27,968	91	35,241	87.1%	38,371	78.4%	97.3	93.3%	73.9	68.6%
Black or African American	2,018	6.6	2,726	6.7%	3,112	6.4%	1.6	1.7%	20.4	19.4%
American Indian & Alaska Native	37	0.1	190	0.5%	n/a	n/a	0.3	n/a	0.7	n/a
Asian	469**	1.5	1,652	4.1%	1,718	3.5%	0.4	0.6%	4.3	5.5%
Native Hawaiian /Other Pacific Islander			44	0.1%	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	0.1	n/a
Some other race	215	0.7	1,725	4.3%	n/a	n/a	1.2	n/a	2.7	n/a
HISPANIC or LATINO of any race^	481	1.6	3,580	8.8%	7,665	15.7%	3.3	5.3%	4.7	7.9%

Source: 1990, 2000 U.S. Census of Population DP-1 (SF1)

2010 U.S. Census of Population (some race data was not available)

\*Race alone or in combination with one or more other races listed. The race percentages may add to more than 100 percent because individuals may report more than one race.

\*\*The Asian and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander categories were combined in 1990.

^The 2000 "uncorrected" population totals are used for the Hispanic or Latino of any race because the U.S. Census Bureau did not correct the counts for Hispanic origin.

As demonstrated by Table 3-4, the City's population remains predominately white, but still more diverse than Rockingham County. When one compares the City's population percentage of Hispanic/Latinos to that of the Commonwealth's, the City's percentage is almost two times the amount of Virginia's. However, the Commonwealth's population percentage of Black/African American citizens is more than three times the amount of Harrisonburg's.

When compared to the 2000 Census, the City's Hispanic/Latino population has seen the largest increase by total percentage of the total population. The Hispanic/Latino population increased by 4,085 people; this is an increase of 114 percent.



As noted above, the City has a fairly diverse population, and with that, varieties of cultures and languages are present in the school system. Based upon data from Harrisonburg City Public Schools (HCPS), in December 2010, 38 percent of students were enrolled and designated as Limited English Proficient (LEP) (Limited English Proficient and English as a Second Language, or ESL, are used synonymously). There are 49 languages represented from 47 different countries (including the U.S.), and as shown in Table 3-5 below, there are 1,713 registered LEP students out of a total school enrollment of 4,512. Spotswood elementary school has the largest LEP percentage at 61 percent while Thomas Harrison Middle School has the lowest percentage at 27 percent. The highest LEP percentage, in regard to grade level, occurs within kindergarten classes at 55 percent, whereas 20 percent of twelfth graders make up the lowest percentage of LEP students. The large numbers and percentage of LEP students throughout the school system presents major financial and operational challenges to the City's public school system.

**Table 3-5: LEP Enrollment – Harrisonburg Public Schools  
Number, Percentage & Total by School and Grade  
December 2010**

Grade	KES	SMES	SES	SSES	WES	SKMS	THMS	HHS	LEP Enrollment	Grade Enrollment	% LEP
K	50	42	56	35	51				234	426	55%
1	56	36	49	32	44				217	420	52%
2	52	38	43	25	29				187	358	52%
3	29	38	52	28	31				178	368	48%
4	30	25	38	18	30				141	360	39%
5						42	64		106	350	30%
6						48	49		97	333	29%
7						54	46		100	305	33%
8						41	49		90	303	30%
9								151	151	384	39%
10								86	86	340	25%
11								70	70	286	24%
12								56	56	279	20%
LEP Enrollment	217	179	238	138	185	185	208	363	1,713		
School Enrollment	448	403	388	307	386	527	764	1,289		4,512	
% LEP	48%	44%	61%	45%	48%	35%	27%	28%			38%

Source: Harrisonburg City Public Schools December 2010

KEY: KES = Keister Elementary School; SES = Spotswood Elementary School; SSES = Stone Spring Elementary School; WES = Waterman Elementary School; THMS = Thomas Harrison Middle School; HHS = Harrisonburg High School

The 2000 Census is the most recent, comprehensive data available to demonstrate foreign born residents. That information indicated that Hispanics are not the only ethnic group well-



represented in the City. The data collected includes information on the region/country of birth of the City's foreign-born population, as well as the different languages spoken in households, which provide additional details on the City's diversity. According to the 2000 Census, Harrisonburg's foreign-born population numbered 3,733 persons. Eighty-two percent of the City's foreign-born residents (3,067) were not U.S. citizens. According to the 2007 – 2009 ACS, Harrisonburg's foreign born population increased by 2,526 people for a total of 6,295 residents. Seventy-seven percent of the City's foreign born residents were not U.S. citizens.

Table 3-6 summarizes the place of birth for the City's foreign born residents using the 2000 U.S. Census data. During this time, 52 percent were from Latin America, another 27.1 percent were Asian, and 9.1 percent were Eastern European. In fact, at that time, every populated continent was represented within the City's population. Based upon the LEP data discussed and illustrated above, one can assume the statistics that represent Harrisonburg's foreign born residents has, at a minimum, remained constant.

**Table 3-6: Region/Country of Birth of Foreign-Born Population Harrisonburg, 2000**

<b>Region or Country</b>	<b>Number of Foreign-Born Residents</b>	<b>Percent of Foreign-Born Residents</b>	<b>Percent of Total Harrisonburg Population</b>
<b>North Europe</b> (U.K., Ireland, Sweden)	68	1.82%	0.17%
<b>Western Europe</b> (Austria, France, Germany, Netherlands)	42	1.12	0.10
<b>Southern Europe</b> (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain)	30	0.80	0.07
<b>Eastern Europe</b> Czech. Rep., Belarus, Yugoslavia – 74 Russia – 230 Ukraine – 30	340	9.12	0.84
<b>Asia</b> E. Asia – 300 S. Central Asia – 365 S.E. Asia – 273 W. Asia - 75	1,013	27.14	2.50
<b>Africa</b>	188	5.04	0.47
<b>Australia</b>	8	0.21	0.02
<b>Latin American</b> Caribbean – 100 Central America – 1,706 South America – 133	1,939	51.94	4.80
<b>Canada</b>	105	2.81	0.26
<b>TOTALS</b>	3,733	100%	9.23%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census of Population, Summary File 3

*Income:* Measures of personal and family income provide an indication of the general economic well-being of the population. The latest statistics on income are provided by the ACS in Table 3-7, which indicate the City's median household, family, and per capita income for 2007 – 2009.



Statistics are also provided for comparison purposes for Rockingham County, Charlottesville, and Virginia. The City of Charlottesville is included for comparison because, as with Harrisonburg, its income statistics are affected by the college-aged population base. This demographic typically earns lower wages because they are in school and not working full time.

**Table 3-7: Income for Households, Families and Individuals  
Harrisonburg, Rockingham County, Charlottesville & Virginia**

	<b>Harrisonburg</b>	<b>Rockingham County</b>	<b>Charlottesville</b>	<b>Virginia</b>
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$32,384	\$49,878	\$39,414	\$60,539
<b>Median Non-Family Household Income</b>	\$19,470	\$27,482	\$26,357	\$38,023
<b>Median Family Income</b>	\$49,124	\$57,708	\$59,493	\$72,427
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	\$15,492	\$24,180	\$23,868	\$31,703

Source: 2007 – 2009 American Community Survey

The Census Bureau defines a “household” as all persons who occupy a housing unit, and a “family” as a household consisting of one or more persons who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. A non-family household in the City would include groups of college students living together in off-campus housing. Since many households consist of only one person, median household income is usually less than median family income. “Median” means that half of the households make more than this figure and half make less.

Although there is no way to quantify the exact impact of student households on the City’s median non-family household income, the presence of low wage-earning student households must have a depressing effect on this median figure. Part of the lower income may also be attributed to the presence of lower income households drawn to an urban area for convenient access to services and lower-cost housing. This table reveals that Harrisonburg’s income levels for all profiles are the lowest when compared to Rockingham County, Charlottesville, and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Figure 3-4 below demonstrates, more specifically, the City’s percentage breakdown of its household income by particular income brackets.



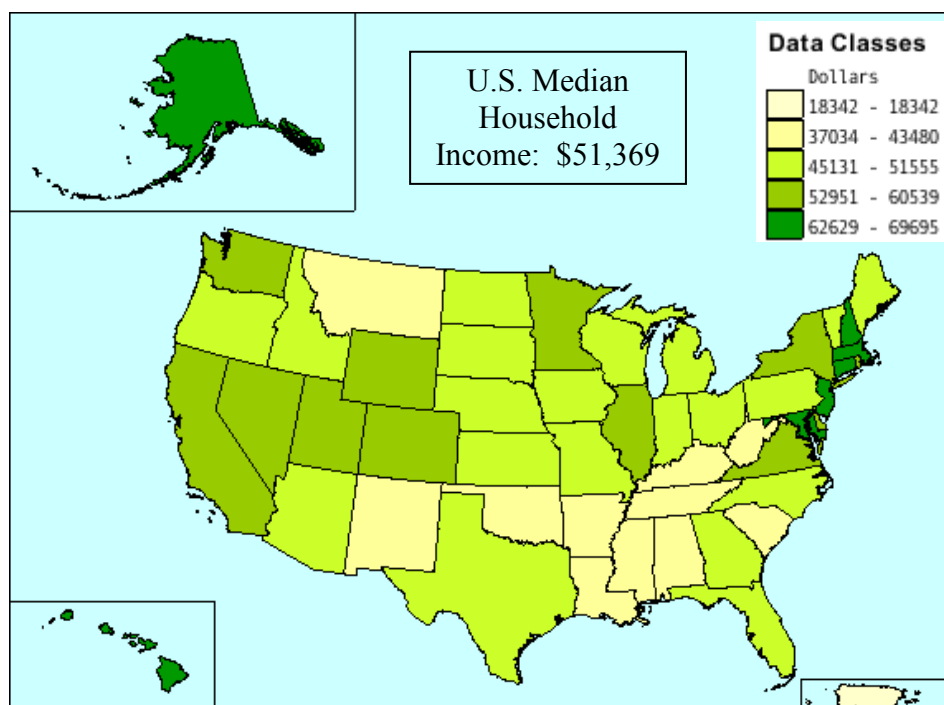
**Figure 3-4: Harrisonburg Household Income Bracket Percentages**



Source: 2007 – 2009 American Community Survey

As shown below, the Commonwealth's median household income in 2009 was higher than the U.S. median. At the same time, the City's median household income was lower than the U.S. average.

**Figure 3-5: U.S. Median Household Income (In 2009 inflation adjusted dollars)**



Source: 2007 – 2009 American Community Survey



*Poverty:* The Census Bureau uses a set of dollar income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is poor. There is only one set of “poverty thresholds” for the entire country, which is updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index. The official poverty definition counts money income before taxes, excluding capital gains and noncash benefits, such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps.

Significantly for the City, poverty is not defined for people in institutional group quarters, including college dormitories. They are excluded from the information collected on poverty and are considered neither as “poor” nor as “nonpoor.” Nevertheless, the presence of students and recent graduates of area colleges and universities who are living off-campus and working at entry level wages can be expected to affect the poverty statistics for non-family households within a college town.

Table 3-8 provides percentage estimates of people within the limits of the City whose income is below the poverty level. This information comes from the ACS population total of residents that are age 16 and over, which is 38,289. Notice that the City’s percentages are higher than those for Rockingham County and for the Commonwealth of Virginia but similar to the City of Charlottesville’s. As noted above, this can be attributed mainly to the City’s college-aged demographic.

**Table 3-8: Percentage of People Whose Income is Below the Poverty Level in Harrisonburg, Rockingham County, Charlottesville, and Virginia**

	<b>Harrisonburg</b>	<b>Rockingham County</b>	<b>Charlottesville</b>	<b>Virginia</b>
<b>All People</b>	33.7%	10.3%	26.6%	10.3%
<b>Percentage by Age</b>				
Under 18 years	22.8%	12.8%	18.2%	13.6%
18 to 64 years	40.0%	9.7%	32.5%	9.4%
65 years and over	9.2%	9.0%	7.9%	8.7%

Source: 2007 – 2009 American Community Survey

The change in poverty levels for families in Harrisonburg, Rockingham County, Charlottesville, and Virginia between 2000 and 2009 are demonstrated in Table 3-9. While Harrisonburg, Rockingham County, and the Commonwealth’s poverty rate increased, Charlottesville’s decreased.



**Table 3-9: Change in Family Poverty Levels – 2000 – 2009**  
**Harrisonburg, Rockingham County, Charlottesville, and Virginia**

	Percent of Families in Poverty		2000-2009 Percent Change
	2000	2009	
<b>Harrisonburg</b>	11.5%	15.4%	3.9%
<b>Rockingham County</b>	5.3%	7.0%	1.7%
<b>Charlottesville</b>	12.0%	8.6%	-3.4%
<b>Virginia</b>	7.0%	7.3%	0.3%

Source: 2000 U.S. Censuses of Population; 2007 – 2009 American Community Survey

### Population Projections

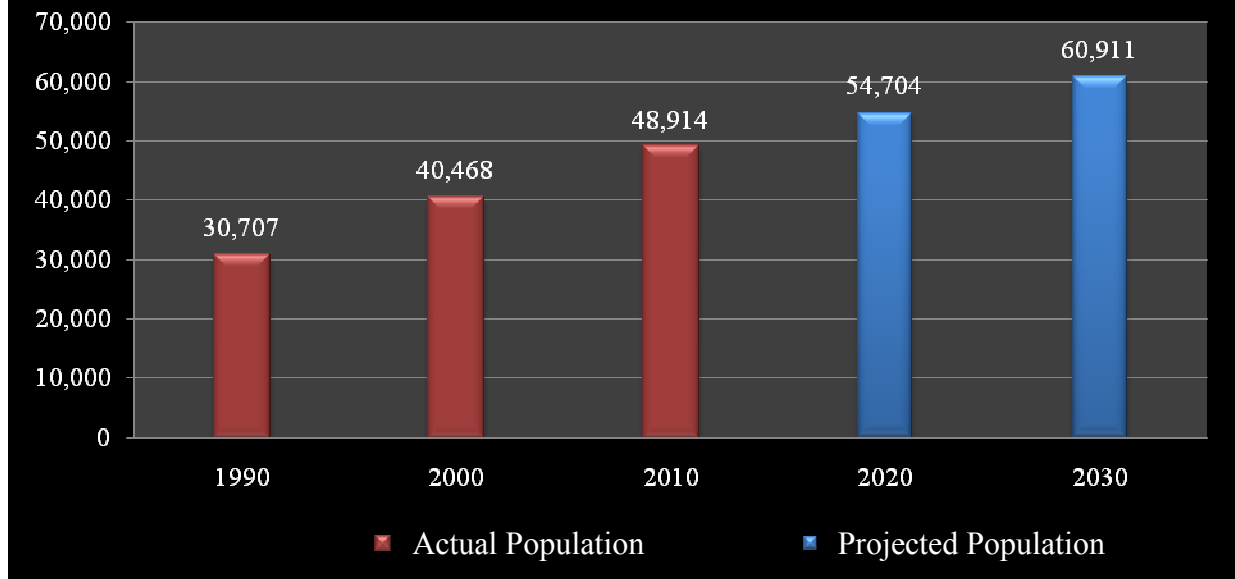
Population projections are often included in planning reports to help guide future plans for public services and facilities. There are many different ways to project future population, and all of them involve a high degree of uncertainty. Variables such as economic growth rates, birth and migration rates, and the enrollment growth rates of JMU and EMU are subject to change from year to year and will greatly affect the accuracy of population projections. It is also important to realize that the rate and distribution of future population growth in the City can be affected in a significant way by the land use policies of the City and surrounding jurisdictions. Population projections should be considered merely as a snapshot of how much the City might grow based on past growth trends. As such, they can allow the City to examine whether or not the continuation of past trends is desirable and how current land use policies might be altered to affect these trends and to move the City toward its preferred future.

The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) regularly provides populations projections for localities throughout the State. Historically, the VEC's projections for the City have been low. Their late 1990s projection for the City's 2000 population was significantly lower than what the 2000 Census actually determined. Prior to the release of the 2010 Census, VEC projected the City would be at 45,794 in 2010, 51,215 in 2020, and 57,026 in 2030. Similar to past projections, VEC's 2010 population projection was less than the 2010 Census. Since the release of the 2010 Census, VEC has not provided an updated population forecast.

The data in Figure 3-6 below was generated by using the estimated growth rate that VEC used in their last projection for the City, which included roughly 11.8 percent growth from 2010 to 2020 and about 11.3 percent growth from 2020 to 2030. These population projections are the same projections used to determine the Urban Development Areas as described in Chapter 5 and as illustrated on the Land Use Guide map included at the end of that chapter.



**Figure 3-6: Harrisonburg Actual and Projected Population**



Harrisonburg’s population figures include students from both universities in the City. This student population plays a significant role in the City as many of our services, infrastructure needs, business needs, and recreation and other necessities are impacted by that demographic. As such, when developing City population projections, consideration has been given to the projections for student enrollments at the universities. Eastern Mennonite University, with an enrollment of approximately 1,600 students, is not projected to experience significant growth in the foreseeable future. The information shown in Table 3-10 and visually depicted in Figure 3-7 was provided by the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV), and presents JMU’s projected enrollment trends for all students for the listed years. While considering these projections, it should be known that JMU’s actual fall 2010 enrollment totaled 19,434 students.

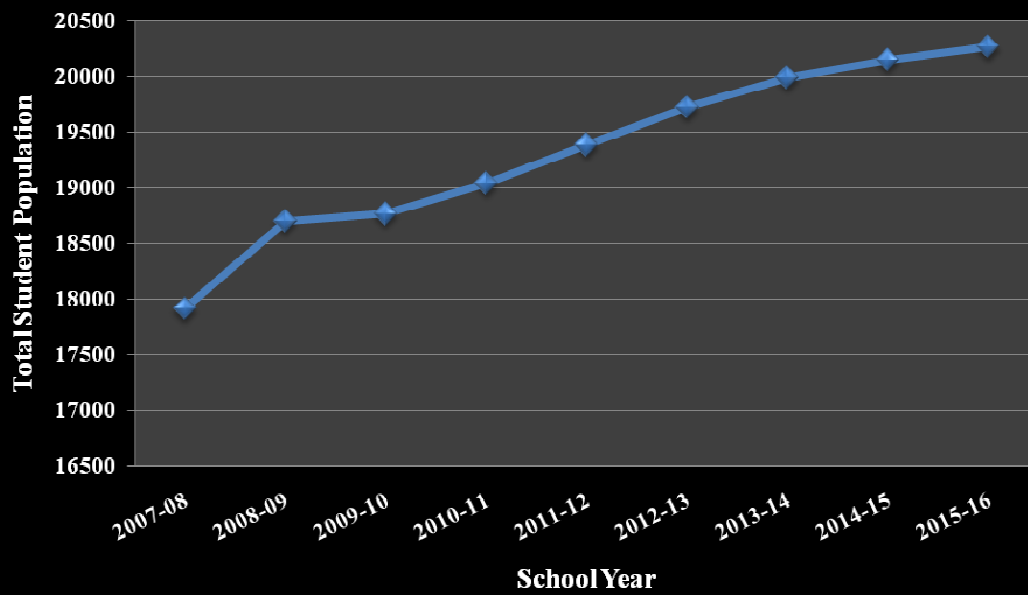
**Table 3-10: JMU Fall Headcount Enrollment, On/Off Campus, All Students**

	Actual		Projections						
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
<b>In-State</b>	12,678	13,355	13,510	13,744	14,114	14,449	14,711	14,871	14,989
<b>Out-of-State</b>	5,240	5,350	5,261	5,301	5,277	5,281	5,285	5,285	5,285
<b>Total</b>	17,918	18,705	18,771	19,045	19,391	19,730	19,996	20,156	20,274

Source: State Council of Higher Education for Virginia



**Figure 3-7: JMU Total Student Population Projections**



Source: State Council of Higher Education for Virginia